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New York

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: We again have a long list of speakers this morning. Therefore, I kindly request that delegates respect the agreed time limit for their statements.

Mr. Subedi (Nepal): I wish to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your unanimous election as Chairperson of the Committee. I extend my sincere appreciation to Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his comprehensive statement.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The world currently spends approximately $850 billion on annual military expenditures. The available statistics clearly support the argument that the resources freed from disarmament or from military expenditure, would significantly contribute to fulfilling the resource crunch to meet the development needs in many of the developing countries. But we have yet to make any progress in releasing the disarmament dividend, to the benefit of much-needed socio-economic development.

It is a matter of concern that there has been very little progress on disarmament lately. At the 2005 World Summit, no understanding could be reached on disarmament and non-proliferation issues. That was preceded by failure at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to agree on any substantive recommendations. This year no agreement could be reached on the review of the control of small arms and lights weapons. The Conference on Disarmament, one of the main mechanisms for disarmament negotiations within the United Nations, has not produced any substantive outcome since 1997. The Disarmament Commission, the specialized deliberative body within the United Nations for multilateral disarmament, is also registering slow progress.

The message is loud and clear: we are not serious about disarmament. Clearly, we need greater political will and a renewed focus to revive genuine negotiations on disarmament issues. It is Nepal's long-standing position that there should be complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical and radiological weapons, in a time-bound manner.

Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons pose the greatest threat to international peace and security. There is also a potential danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors and even terrorists. In the absence of any global international treaty to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we have to rely on the

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implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions to that effect.

My delegation supports the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery and related materials.

There is growing concern over the increasing impasse on nuclear issues involving some aspiring nuclear States, the more so because some of them are outside the framework of negotiations in the United Nations. Nepal strongly believes that all nuclear issues, including the peaceful use of nuclear technology, must be resolved through negotiations, preferably within the purview of the United Nations.

Nepal values multilateralism as the sole mechanism for negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation that will lead to durable world peace.

We cannot resolve the nuclear issues and the issues related to weapons of mass destruction unless we apply certain ground rules and principles evolved at the United Nations. While those stand-offs are resolved, efforts must be made to respect the principles of national sovereignty and the mechanism of collective security within the United Nations. Similarly, States cannot absolve themselves of their international obligations to comply with relevant treaty regimes for non-proliferation, test ban and peaceful use of nuclear technology.

Nepal welcomes the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an effective way to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and supports them as a means to advance the cause of disarmament.

As a country that experienced a decade-long conflict, which ended only recently, Nepal supports the non-proliferation and prevention of the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. Since the adoption in 2001 of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, there has been little progress. As the Review Conference on the control of small arms and light weapons ended without agreement, we need to make genuine efforts to revive this process to discourage the illicit small arms trade and prevent the illicit production, use and stockpiling of small arms and light weapons, mainly by non-State actors.

Nepal is unequivocally opposed to an arms race in outer space, which must remain free of deadly weapons, and must only be used for peaceful collective human endeavours.

The role of regional centres for peace and disarmament is crucial to galvanizing the pace of disarmament and the process of arms control at the regional level. As host country for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal is fully committed to early relocation of the Centre to Kathmandu. The Government of Nepal has expressed its readiness to sign the host country agreement in accordance with the General Assembly resolution. I reiterate the long-standing commitment of the Government of Nepal to bear the operating costs of the Centre and to accord privileges and immunities to its personnel. We urge the Secretariat to complete the internal procedure for the host country agreement and memorandum of understanding at the earliest for the relocation of the Centre to Nepal without any further delay.

The issue of disarmament has a great bearing on the maintenance of international peace and security. However, to our utter dismay, it appears to have been pushed to the back burner of the international agenda. Nepal has abiding faith in the promise of collective resolve and determination to be exercised through the United Nations. The active and influential role of the United Nations alone can push collective action and concerted effort towards realizing the objectives of disarmament, regulation of armaments and the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction, in the greater interest of all humankind. It is time to work hard collectively to put multilateral disarmament on the right track.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): I join other speakers in conveying my delegation's congratulations to you, Madam, on your assumption of our Chair, and assure you of our full cooperation to ensure the success of your stewardship.

We associate ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of Nigeria and Indonesia, on behalf of the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement respectively.

We are meeting at a period of great strains on international security, with the spectre of new challenges exacerbating the existing fragile environment. Growing hotbeds of tension, militarism and terrorism, as well as fears of cascading horizontal and vertical nuclear proliferation, threaten to unravel the international system of collective security. In this grave atmosphere, it is worrisome that the several treaties on disarmament, which if implemented would have constituted an arms control framework, continue to be a litany of broken promises.

Indeed, our disappointment over last year's abysmal developments within the international disarmament system is yet to be assuaged, due to the stagnation, if not retrogression, in the disarmament realm. Given this grim condition, we cannot but stress that international peace and security is at a critical crossroads, and that innovative, bold, realistic and achievable solutions are required.

In pursuit of the collective security which we all generally deem necessary, it is imperative that we focus on building a global security environment underpinned by mutual cooperation and trust. For that to be achieved, we should expunge unilateralism, which is often influenced and fuelled by parochial interests stemming from antedated policies that are inconsistent with present realities and therefore doomed to failure. It should be replaced by multilateralism, which the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission has recognized as the only viable option for the pursuit of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. To that end, we urge Member States not only to espouse multilateralism, but also to exhibit genuine commitment and the political will to objectively and faithfully abide by the outcome of such negotiations.

Even though for more than four decades nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation have remained the predominant, albeit not exclusive, challenges to international security, the world continues to be haunted by the nuclear menace, despite overwhelming international support for meaningful progress on the issues. Indeed, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation seem to be plunging into an irredeemable abyss as a result of the absence of an even-handed and coordinated approach, as well as the undue attention paid to the symptoms rather than the fundamental causes undermining the process. If we all acknowledged that the two are complementary and mutually reinforcing, then the prevailing lopsided relationship would be reversed, thus stemming a looming accretion of nuclearism, with its attendant adverse ramifications for international security.

Without tangible progress in disarmament, the current emphasis on non-proliferation cannot be sustained. Despite its inherent flaws, we all reckon that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone for work in pursuit of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is therefore imperative that State parties take urgent measures to revive confidence and credibility in the Treaty through scrupulous compliance with its provisions.

The non-nuclear-weapon States parties have faithfully discharged their part of the bargain, as evidenced by the inconsequential change in the membership of the "haves", and they naturally expect the same from their partners. We therefore urge those five countries to go beyond paying lip service to article VI and take steps towards nuclear disarmament. Concrete achievement in the implementation of the 13 practical steps is essential in this regard.

We are among the first to recognize the considerable reduction in nuclear arsenals, but the existence of 27,000 nuclear weapons, some on high alert, makes a mockery of so-called progressive development, and has failed to lessen the general fear that the world remains insecure and vulnerable to mass destruction. Our position is also predicated on the fact that those reductions are undertaken without international verification and a firm commitment to irreversibility.

We stress that a verifiable and irreversible disarmament process is essential to the long-term credibility and viability of the NPT. It will be difficult for nuclear-weapon States to take the high moral ground in trying to prevent others from aspiring to join the so-called elitist club, unless they unambiguously abide by their disarmament obligations, abandon their nuclear deterrence policy and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security in order to negate its erroneous grandeur in international relations and thereby dissuade others from striving to acquire such heinous weapons.

Irrespective of our strong reservations about the growing focus on non-proliferation, my delegation views as ironic the intransigent position of some of the

leading proponents of that unjustifiable policy on nuclear-weapon-free zones and negative security assurances, which have been widely recognized as complementary measures to enhance the non-proliferation regime. We call on those countries to exhibit sincerity in their conviction by favourably considering the clarion call for a legally binding agreement on negative security assurances and also to extend the necessary support for the strengthening of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

As a country that acquired an atomic reactor in the 1960s, Ghana will continue to strongly advocate for the right of States, especially developing countries, to the peaceful use of nuclear technology, given its immense contribution to socio-economic development. However, we also acknowledge that this inalienable right should be pursued under the rubric of international agreements, especially with respect to verifiability and transparency. My delegation thus joins others in calling for the verification mechanism of the International Atomic Energy Agency to be strengthened to enable the Agency to scrupulously discharge its onerous responsibility.

Although our concerted effort to prevent nuclear terrorism is progressing steadily, it would be greatly advanced by an agreement on banning the production of fissile material. In this connection, we welcome the holding of a debate within the Conference on Disarmament on the banning of the production of fissile materials for military purposes, as a positive measure to overcome the protracted stalemate over the issue. We call on the Conference on Disarmament to sustain the momentum by expediting action on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work to facilitate the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty devoid of any preconditions, but with the aim of reaching an agreement addressing the concerns of all parties.

Illicit small arms and light weapons, a misnomer for lethal instruments whose abuse has wrought havoc, caused untold distress to millions of people and fuelled insecurity and instability across the globe, continue to be of grave concern to my delegation. While laudable progress has been made since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action in 2001, we are yet to attain the envisaged objective and thereby stifle the obnoxious malpractices of callous persons who have turned wanton deaths into a lucrative business. We are disheartened by the outcome of the recent Conference to review progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Although it was a missed opportunity, we should not be discouraged, but, rather, should resolve to vigorously pursue our collective effort to achieve the ultimate aim. We owe it to the numerous victims who look up to this lofty Organization to lead efforts to stem the proliferation of those weapons of mass destruction, as well as to realise their dream that others should be protected from the tragic ordeal that they have suffered and continue to suffer.

We are under no illusion that the goal of a world free from the fear of war and insecurity will be achieved overnight. However, with tenacity of conviction and unity of purpose, we shall overcome the odds and realize our collective aspirations. We have a choice: either to protect the world and humanity from destruction or plunge it further into eventual annihilation. We hope that our decisions will resonate with the desire of the majority outside this room, who pray and clamour daily for a safe and peaceful world.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation offers its warm congratulations to you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. Indeed, we are delighted, because your election as a woman blazes a trail in the Committee's history. We are confident that you will provide the requisite leadership to steer our work to a successful conclusion. We express similar sentiments to the other members of the Bureau, and assure you of our cooperation throughout the session. I also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Tanaka, for his introductory statement.

This meeting is being held at a time when the international community faces increasingly divergent views on how best to address the issues of arms control and disarmament. The need to implement disarmament and non-proliferation measures continues to be a major challenge to the maintenance of international peace and security. The last decade witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the successful negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. Those achievements flowed from shared international concerns about the

danger that weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons pose to mankind.

By contrast, the international community has made no appreciable progress on arms control and disarmament since the beginning of this decade, the most notable failures being the lack of an outcome to the 2005 NPT Review Conference and the failure by Member States to agree on a thematic cluster on disarmament and non-proliferation in the World Summit Outcome. Those failures are additional to the perennial impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the lingering ambivalence about the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. While Nigeria shares the view of the majority of delegations that the treaty should contain a reliable verification mechanism, which should not exclude existing stockpiles, the debate over this issue should not be used as an excuse for inaction or delay on the commencement of substantive negotiations on this important subject.

The risk to international peace and security posed by the prevailing stalemate in multilateral disarmament negotiations is glaring. It is common knowledge that threats emanating from the excessive accumulation of weapons of mass destruction could be a factor stimulating others to acquire them as well. The report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission amply described the danger inherent in weapons accumulation, when it stated that States would aspire to acquire nuclear weapons as long as any State had them, and the risk exists that such weapons will one day be used either by design or by accident as long as they remain.

This is why the problem of lack of compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation regime under the NPT is worrisome. There is no gainsaying the fact that the Treaty remains one of the most vital instruments for maintaining global peace and security. Should it persist, the mistaken impression that the obligation to comply with the Treaty lies only with non-nuclear-weapon States parties can only be detrimental to the aims and objectives of the Treaty. Nigeria reaffirms that all States parties, nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon alike, have an obligation to ensure non-proliferation in all its aspects. States that possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction can no longer pretend that their weapons pose no threat to the international community.

The call for non-proliferation must be complemented by concrete action in the area of nuclear disarmament. That is the most effective way to ensure that such weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors. Indeed, States that feel threatened by the possession of those weapons need to be assured, through confidence-building measures as well as security guarantees anchored in legally binding instruments, that their decisions to forgo the acquisition of the weapons were not misplaced.

Nigeria will continue to abide by its commitments under the various disarmament and arms control agreements to which it is party, as well as to work with other nations in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation in all their aspects. Such cooperation should lead to the achievement of the overall objective of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the opening for signature of the CTBT. Yet the Treaty has not entered into force, despite the fact that 176 States have signed it and 135 have ratified it. While reiterating our support for the total elimination of nuclear testing, we wish to stress the importance of achieving the Treaty's entry into force, in particular through adherence by the remaining annex II States, whose ratification is mandatory for the Treaty to enter into force. Nigeria welcomes the ratification of the Treaty by Viet Nam, last March, and endorses the joint ministerial declaration on the CTBT adopted in New York on 20 September this year. Pending its entry into force, the Treaty should continue to enjoy the support of Member States, which we call upon to continue to maintain the existing moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or explosions of any other nuclear device.

Nigeria reiterates its support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the regions concerned. As a demonstration of our commitment to the denuclearization of Africa, Nigeria initiated in January this year, at the eighth ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union, held in Khartoum, the Sudan, a proposal that the Council adopted in a decision calling on States that have not signed or ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba — on the African nuclear-weapon-free zone — or the relevant protocols, to do so, in order to enable the Treaty to

enter into force without further delay. We urge the States concerned to implement or comply with, as applicable, the decision of the Council.

We also welcome the signing by five Central Asian States on 8 September this year of the treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The Sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, to be held in November, offers an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the international regime in confronting and removing the threat of biological weapons and their use. An effective verification mechanism will strengthen the Convention in that regard. We trust that States parties will give serious consideration to that matter during the Review Conference.

In the West African subregion, the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons has fuelled conflicts and compromised our well-thought-out efforts to create a basis for peace, security and stability in a number of our countries. Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which initiated and faithfully maintained a Moratorium on the importation and exportation of such arms, have now transformed the Moratorium into a landmark Convention. Adopted in June this year, the Convention, inter alia, places a ban on transfers of arms and materials used in their manufacture into, from or through West Africa.

Of particular significance for our region is the ban on the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors, who have been implicated in the recurrent conflicts in the subregion and the attendant political instability and destruction of infrastructure. A member State of ECOWAS shall be granted exemption for such transfers solely for purposes of legitimate national defence and security needs or in order to participate in peacekeeping efforts, and the transfers will have to receive the certification and approval of other Member States.

Our determination to eradicate the scourge from our subregion is therefore not in doubt. We call upon the international community, manufacturers of small arms and light weapons and brokering firms to respect the Convention. Nigeria invites other Members of the United Nations to follow the example of ECOWAS in confronting this menace.

The Nigerian delegation wishes to express its disappointment over the failure to agree on a final document at the first Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. That failure must not detract from the continuing relevance of the Programme as a valid platform for national, regional and global action. The review process should be kept alive, and the follow-up arrangements adhered to, in order to ensure the realization of shared goals and objectives.

As a demonstration of Nigeria's commitment to the fight against illicit small arms and light weapons, the Nigerian Government this year acceded to the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which entered into force in July 2005. In that regard, I recall the statement delivered on behalf of President Obasanjo to the General Assembly in September: "We also call for a comprehensive and legally binding global arms trade treaty." (A/61/PV.18, p. 12) We believe that such a treaty should establish common standards on arms transfers. We shall work with delegations for the success of that goal.

Finally, the Nigerian delegation will again this year sponsor a draft resolution entitled "United Nations Disarmament Fellowship, Training and Advisory Services Programme". The Programme has trained 704 fellows from 155 States. We appreciate the support of Member States that have continued to provide resources and facilities for participants. We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for the able manner in which he has implemented the Programme over the years. It is our hope that co-sponsors will support the draft resolution at this session, and that many more States will do likewise.

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): I have the privilege to take the floor on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is composed of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country.

ASEAN congratulates you, Madam, on your well-deserved election. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. ASEAN also welcomes the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament

Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka. We give an assurance of our full cooperation.

We are meeting at a time of heightened disappointment in and concern about the lack of progress in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The disappointing outcome of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the impasse at the Conference on Disarmament are serious setbacks we have suffered in the past year. It is imperative that we draw lessons from our failures and move forward.

In the light of the daunting challenges we face due to deep-rooted animosities in some regions of the world, compounded by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the growing threat of terrorism, the international community must join hands. ASEAN therefore welcomes the high-level Security Council debate on closer cooperation with regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, which was held on 20 September 2006.

The ASEAN countries reaffirm their support for the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, underlining the existence of an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In that regard, ASEAN countries intend to co-sponsor the draft resolution introduced annually by Malaysia reaffirming that important ruling.

Likewise, ASEAN countries intend to co-sponsor the draft resolution initiated by Myanmar calling upon the nuclear-weapon States to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The draft resolution also calls for the convening at an early date of an international conference on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, to identify and deal with concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

It is our earnest hope that both draft resolutions will continue to enjoy widespread support in the Committee.

ASEAN countries have consistently underscored the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We reiterate our call on nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

We welcome the Final Declaration of the fourth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, held in New York in September 2005, as well as the Joint Ministerial Statement on the CTBT issued last month in New York. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Treaty's opening for signature. The Treaty now enjoys nearly universal support, as it has been signed by 176 States and ratified by 135. We welcome its ratification by Viet Nam in March this year. It is our hope that the ratification by 10 more countries required for its entry into force will follow soon.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. ASEAN is therefore deeply disappointed that the 2005 Review Conference, held in New York, was unable to adopt a final document, due to deep divisions between several States parties. It is imperative that the 2010 Review Conference does not suffer the same fate. The preparatory process, which is scheduled to start next year, will be crucial in laying the groundwork for the Review Conference. ASEAN urges all Member States to work towards consensus to meet the common threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We emphasize the importance of full and non-selective implementation of the NPT. We reiterate our view that their total elimination is the only absolute guarantee against the threat or use of nuclear weapons. We renew our call for the full and effective implementation of the practical steps set out in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. In that connection, we are convinced that there exists an urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfil their obligations under the NPT.

ASEAN shares the view that there is also an urgent need for a comprehensive approach to the proliferation of missiles. ASEAN considers the entry into force of the 2002 Moscow Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reduction to be an important step towards reducing strategic nuclear weapons. We continue to believe that the concerns related to missile proliferation are best addressed through agreements

that are multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory.

Chemical and biological weapons also pose a growing threat. As the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has a vital role in countering the challenge posed by those weapons, ASEAN is encouraged to note that 180 States, representing 98 per cent of the global population, have acceded to the Convention, making it nearly universal. We invite all States that have not yet signed or ratified it to do so as soon as possible.

We also call on States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction as soon as possible. We look forward to the successful outcome of the upcoming Sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, which is to be held in Geneva next month.

The ASEAN countries remain deeply concerned by the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions. We recognize the need to establish and maintain control over private ownership of small arms. We call on States, in particular major producing States, to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited to Governments, or entities duly authorized by Governments, and to implement legal restrictions preventing the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons.

We encourage all initiatives by States to mobilize resources and expertise, as well as to provide assistance, to strengthen the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We are disappointed at the inability of the United Nations Conference to review progress in its implementation, which was held in New York in June, to agree on a final document.

We take note of the fact that the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has been ratified, and acceded to, by 151 countries.

ASEAN reiterates its support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We reiterate our deep concern over the lack of progress in the Disarmament Commission on the agenda and objectives. Steps leading to the convening of the fourth special session, with the participation of all Member States, to review and assess the implementation of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, should be taken expeditiously.

ASEAN has put forward initiatives that have significantly contributed to peace and security in the region. Among them was the establishment of the South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. The accession of nuclear-weapon States to the Treaty establishing the zone will further strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, thereby enhancing regional peace and security. We believe that the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, contribute to strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We welcome last month's signing by five Central Asian countries of the Treaty establishing a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiation forum on disarmament cannot be overemphasized. We are therefore deeply disappointed by the continuing impasse there, and note with regret the Conference's inability to adopt its programme of work for 2006. We also regret that this year the Conference was not able to submit its substantive report to the First Committee. It is our hope that the States concerned will demonstrate their commitment to the process of disarmament, and exercise political will to overcome that deadlock.

We take this opportunity to express once again our appreciation to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and to the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa, for their contribution to international peace and security. Regional seminars and forums organized by those Centres contribute to the progress of ongoing security and disarmament processes in their respective regions. We appreciate and fully support the substantial contribution of the Centres in raising awareness about disarmament issues.

ASEAN has been making important contributions to regional peace and security. We recall the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II at the Ninth ASEAN Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2003, which decided to establish an ASEAN Community comprising three pillars: political and security cooperation, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation. That is in line with ASEAN Vision 2020, which envisages ASEAN as a community of nations bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.

We also recall the adoption by the ASEAN leaders of the Vientiane Action Programme, the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Plan of Action, as well as the signing of the ASEAN Framework Agreement for the Integration of Priority Sectors and the progress made in the implementation of programmes and projects building up to the realization of the ASEAN Community, as enshrined in the Bali Concord II.

The ASEAN countries continue to attach special importance to confidence-building measures among participants in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). At the ARF meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in July this year, we welcomed Bangladesh as the twenty-sixth participating country. We are confident that Bangladesh's participation will contribute to enhancing political stability and security in the region. The activities of the Forum have contributed to political stability, security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia is an instrument of peace, security and cooperation in inter-State relations. To date, 10 countries outside ASEAN have acceded to it. Those accessions testify to the continued relevance of the Treaty in contributing to regional peace, security and stability. In that context, we welcome the accession of Australia on 10 December 2005. We also welcome France's decision to accede to it. Timor-Leste and the European Union have also indicated their intention to accede. It is our hope that other external partners will do so in the near future, so as to create a favourable environment conducive to development in the region. That would benefit not only ASEAN, but all its partners.

In conclusion, I wish to state that it is ASEAN's hope that the First Committee will be able to successfully hold substantive deliberations on the issues on our agenda and turn small steps into larger strides. Let us work together to restore confidence in this Committee and other disarmament forums. In that spirit of cooperation, we look forward to working closely with you, Madam Chairperson, to ensure that our work is fruitful.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of my delegation I extend to you, Madam, my most sincere congratulations on the confidence placed in you through your election as Chairperson of this very important Committee. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We look forward to cooperating with the Committee to ensure that our work is as successful as we all desire.

My delegation also expresses its gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, for his comprehensive statement and for his constructive role in supporting and ensuring the success of our work.

We also express our support for the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Allow me also to convey my greetings to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, who is with us today.

The pessimism that permeates the current international political scene is in sharp contrast to the optimism that prevailed throughout the international community following the end of the period of international tensions in the early 1990s. That atmosphere of pessimism is cause for serious concern, given repeated attempts by some to impose faulty and short-sighted policies that contravene the purposes and principles of the Charter, thereby flouting the language of dialogue and respect for the interests of others and encouraging the language of force, repression and subjugation in an environment that cannot countenance such an approach.

That situation prompts us to recognize the urgent need to intensify sincere efforts and transparent political will to respect the Charter and endeavour to work in a multilateral and transparent framework to restore the confidence of the international community

in international organizations and restore balance in international relations.

It is more urgent than ever that we work intensely to achieve disarmament in the area of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, so as to protect humankind from the danger of the use or threat of use of such weapons and avert the serious current and future environmental dangers resulting from military nuclear reactors and buried underground nuclear waste — a practice carried out by Israel, the occupying Power in the Syrian Golan. In that regard, we stress that it is important that the Committee should devote particular attention to avoiding double standards and discrimination against the interests of peoples under various names and classifications.

An example of that is the assistance provided by some to an aggressor State like Israel, which has been condemned by the international community hundreds of times for its occupation by force of the territories of others and its suppression of the rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State on their national territory. I would also mention that some are also helping aggressor States like Israel to possess nuclear military technology, and providing them with all the means, expertise and equipment necessary to manufacture nuclear weapons. In doing so those countries providing assistance are ignoring all international regulations and United Nations resolutions governing this field. At the same time, they are also pressuring other States through flimsy political pretexts to prevent them from using nuclear energy for purely civilian peaceful purposes.

The fact that Israel has built eight nuclear reactors — which actually produce plutonium for building nuclear bombs — on a piece of land of no more than 20,000 square kilometres should be addressed quickly and decisively, for these reactors threaten the security of every country in the region without exception.

Super-Powers violated their international obligations with regard to nuclear non-proliferation when for decades they provided — as they continue to provide — Israel with nuclear reactors, deuterium, scientists, nuclear technology and the means to deliver nuclear weapons with missiles. A European State recently provided Israel with three submarines capable of carrying and launching nuclear missiles. Another European State is currently participating in Israel's military activities in space, namely, its Venus project, which includes a satellite used for military purposes. It would be much better for those States to question themselves about these policies, which undermine the credibility of their claims that they are working to bring about the universality of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

My country has repeatedly expressed its wish to make the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. Syria submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council on 29 January 2003 to make this region free from all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Regrettably, so far this initiative has not been adopted and is still in blue before the Council for its consideration because of the opposition of the delegation of one of the major States and the double standards used by that delegation in dealing with issues of weapons of mass destruction.

Because of the inability of the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to adopt that resolution, Israel continues to challenge the international community by continuing its military nuclear programmes and by its refusal to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to subject its nuclear facilities and activities to IAEA supervision.

Israel is a source of conventional and nuclear terrorism in our region. It is an insurmountable obstacle to the security and safety of the Middle East region. Needless to say, for a long time the international community has understood that position of Israel, which violates all international norms regulating nuclear proliferation and strongly harms the credibility and universality of the NPT. It also prevents the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East following the example of the Treaties of Rarotonga, Pelindaba, Bangkok, Tlatelolco and Semipalatinsk.

My delegation calls upon the international community to call for the following. First, Israel — the only State in the region that possesses nuclear facilities and a nuclear arsenal — must adhere to the NPT and subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards of the IAEA. It must completely eliminate its entire arsenal of such weapons on the basis of Security Council resolution 487 (1981). Secondly, the United Nations and the IAEA should be endorsed as the best framework for serious talks in order to

establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Some voices have loudly claimed, in referring to the General Assembly's first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978, at which the international community set priorities to work seriously to bring about nuclear disarmament first, then disarmament of the other weapons of mass destruction and finally conventional weapons, that that has become anachronistic and inappropriate for the present time. My delegation would point out that those voices are not really being truthful, because we have to remind everyone that stopping the United Nations from bringing about those three priorities, agreed internationally, is what led to the weakening of international treaties and international controls to bring about full disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. That is what led to the halting of the work of the Disarmament Commission and the Commission on Disarmament. The insistence of nuclear-weapon States on not fulfilling their obligations according to the outcomes and results of the two review conferences of 1995 and 2000 is the real reason for the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. They also led to the international community's complaint about the presence of blatant selectivity and flagrant injustice in dealing with disarmament issues. These two factors also increase our suspicions about the ability of international instruments to maintain their credibility.

The Syrian Arab Republic follows disarmament issues closely and emphasizes its obligations to support the relevant United Nations resolutions concerning the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction in the world in general and in the Middle East in particular, since my country has been a party since 1968 to the NPT and is in compliance with the corresponding full safeguards régime. My country supports General Assembly resolution 55/33 X, entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons". We call for practical steps to set a specific timetable and programme for the full elimination of nuclear weapons, totally under effective international control.

Mr. Chem (Cambodia): At the outset, allow me to sincerely congratulate you, Madam, upon your election as Chairperson. My delegation believes that under your able direction our deliberations will be successful. You can rest assured of our full support and cooperation. We also warmly welcome Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, and wish him success in that important post.

Cambodia associates itself with the statement by Ambassador Rezlan Ishar Jenie, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia, on behalf of members of the Non-Aligned Movement and also the statement by the Ambassador of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In the face of uncertainties and challenges, when the world seems to be overwhelmed by conflict and serious threats, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, environmental degradation and infectious diseases, it is important for all of us to keep our commitment to maintain peace and security in the world. We are successful in producing larger quantities of weapons notorious for individual or mass killing, but we have been far less successful in reducing them.

On the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, my delegation expresses its disappointment that the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference ended with failure and that the 2005 World Summit Outcome did not include any section on disarmament and non-proliferation. The NPT regime and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) need to be reinforced; they remain basic legal instruments for the long-term achievement of complete and irreversible disarmament.

Being genuinely committed to countering the proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction, Cambodia has ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), becoming a State party in August 2005. Cambodia calls on all States that have not yet become party to the CWC to do so in order to achieve universal adherence to it. My delegation believes that that would ensure the universal validity of that multilateral instrument, which bans the development, production, excessive stockpiling, use or transfer of chemical weapons, and would enhance collective security.

Cambodia is a non-nuclear-energy-producing country. Nonetheless, we have ratified a number of conventions: the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material; the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection; the International Convention for the Suppression of

Terrorist Bombings; and the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages. In accordance with article VII (4) of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Royal Government of Cambodia has established a National Authority to prohibit nuclear, biological and radioactive weapons as a positive step to actively implement the Convention.

Progress on the issue of small arms has been hampered because of disagreement on the final document of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Despite that fact, we should not be discouraged, and we must continue to do more work to address this issue.

After three decades of war, genocide and conflict, Cambodia is well placed to reiterate its unequivocal commitment to the collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons in order to cement peace, security and political stability in the Kingdom. It has developed a number of programmes, ranging from law enforcement on arms control to the "Weapon for Development" programme, which has led to the destruction of nearly 200,000 units of collected and surplus weapons since 1998.

My delegation takes this opportunity to express its deep thanks and appreciation to Japan and the European Union for their valuable assistance to the programmes. In June this year the European Union announced its completion of its assistance projects, leaving Japan as the sole partner with the Government. Being successful in small arms control, weapon collection and destruction, Cambodia has been endorsed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a "Lead Shepherd" country — a country that coordinates ASEAN member States — in countering arms smuggling. That was done at the Fifth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, held in Hanoi in November 2005.

Cambodia accordingly proposed establishing a resource centre as a coordinating body to facilitate and mobilize efforts and resources to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in South-East Asia. We would highly appreciate and welcome support from the international community to realize the important goal of setting up the Centre, which would make an important contribution to our common struggle against transnational crime and terrorism.

On the international front, Cambodia reiterates its unequivocal commitment to the full implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects by developing national programmes for the control of small arms, such as the long-standing plan to curb the illicit small arms trade.

The concern over the proliferation of small arms could be successfully addressed through a multifaceted mechanism, and the United Nations is the option we are looking for. More concerted efforts and political commitment are needed so that we can achieve the common interest. In this connection, my delegation welcomes this year's report (S/2006/109) of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, especially on the 12 core recommendations in his September 2002 report (S/2002/1053) and the observations and conclusions, which Member States should use as a good foundation to prevent and reduce the spread of small arms. My delegation stands ready to join hands with others on those issues.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I congratulate you, Madam, and the other members of the Bureau, on your election to steer the work of the First Committee at the present session. We are confident, Madam, that with your rich experience in multilateral diplomacy, you will guide this important session to a successful conclusion. We assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Choi Young-jin, of the Republic of Korea, for his work as Chairman during the previous session.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the statement made by the representative of Myanmar on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, we would like to highlight the following points, which we think are of great significance to world peace and security.

Today's international situation continues to undergo rapid and complex changes. Our world

remains plagued with insecurity, injustice, armed conflicts, acts of aggression, terror, ethnic strife, interference in the internal affairs of States, civil wars, natural disasters, disease, poverty and energy instability, which all pose major threats to world peace and security.

At the same time, humankind still lives under the threat of nuclear weapons, due to the fact that the commitment the international community made 35 years ago to rid the world of nuclear weapons has not been met, nor have nuclear arsenals been decreased or dismantled. On the contrary, those weapons have grown tremendously, both in quantity and quality. So has the number of nuclear-weapon States. All this has also increased the risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists.

In the face of such a situation, efforts should be made seriously and honestly by all States concerned, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, which have the legal obligation under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

The performance of the NPT over the past years has not yielded expected results. The negotiations on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices have yet to begin. It is regrettable that very little progress has been achieved on this issue. In that regard, we earnestly hope that the Conference on Disarmament will conclude at an early date the negotiations for a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices, taking into account both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. As party to the CTBT since October 2000, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has actively participated in the seminars organized by the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, as well as the annual meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum. In that regard, we welcome Viet Nam's ratification of the CTBT in March this year, and reaffirm the importance and urgency of the entry into force of the instrument. We also take this opportunity to call upon all States that have not yet ratified the Treaty, particularly those whose ratification is required for its entry into force, to do so without delay.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic supports efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world, and calls for cooperation and broad consultations in order to achieve agreements freely arrived at among States of the regions concerned. We strongly believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes a positive step towards freeing humankind from the threat of nuclear weapons and achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament. In that regard, we welcome and support the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a State party to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, the Bangkok Treaty. As such, we have done our best to contribute to ASEAN's common efforts in that respect.

We also welcome Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, as well as the signing at Semipalatinsk on 8 September by five Central Asian countries of the Treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In that context, it is essential that nuclear-weapon-States provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States of the nuclear-weapon-free zones concerned.

Like many other delegations, that of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is of the view that, in addressing the important disarmament and international security issues, the role of the Conference on Disarmament, as the multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, should be reaffirmed. In that regard, we reiterate our principled position in support of the initiative to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We express the hope that the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session will be reconvened at an early date, as mandated by the General Assembly, with a view to reaching agreement on its objectives and agenda.

In the light of negative developments, we cannot but share the concern of the world community about the failure of the recent Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit

Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. However, the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that the Programme of Action is a living document, which remains a framework for cooperation that empowers States to continue to work for its full and effective implementation.

Equally essential for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security is universal adherence to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). There is a special need to strengthen it through multilateral negotiations for a legally binding protocol to the Convention. Our delegation is also of the view that the threat of biological weapons as instruments of war and terror has stressed the necessity and urgency of ensuring the Convention's effectiveness. In that respect, we commend the positive efforts made by States parties to the BTWC at the Fifth Review Conference. We look forward to further progress in strengthening the Convention at the upcoming Sixth Review Conference, to be held in Geneva.

Having learned from past experience about the danger of nuclear weapons, we cannot but stress the need for the world community to make every effort to ensure that mankind can live in the world of the twenty-first century without the threat of such weapons. We strongly believe that their total elimination is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of their use. We also believe that non-nuclear-weapon States should be effectively assured by nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. To that end, my delegation hopes that this session will provide an excellent opportunity for all of us to look into all possible ways and means to implement all the commitments made.

With concerted efforts and a high sense of responsibility for world peace and security and the destiny of mankind, we should all work together towards the common objective of achieving general and complete disarmament, and in particular nuclear disarmament. Disarmament cannot be fully attained without the political will and support of all Members of the United Nations. It is time to spare no effort to get the disarmament process back on track, move forward and build a world of peace and equitable development, free of nuclear weapons.

On that note, I wish the Committee great success at our current session.

Mr. Walsh (Canada): Allow me first to congratulate you, Madam, and the other members of the Bureau on your election, and to express my delegation's confidence that under your leadership the Committee will have a fruitful session.

The work of this Committee is of particular significance at this juncture, with the outlook for multilateral arms control and disarmament remaining very much an open question. Three review conferences of major treaties or programmes were scheduled in 2006. One has taken place already, and two more will get under way in November. Following last year's outcomes at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Millennium + 5 Summit, we need to get back on a positive track.

The first of the 2006 review conferences, relating to the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, took place here in New York in July. Regrettably, States were unable to agree on an outcome document. Canada was disappointed that agreement could not be reached on an issue of such great relevance to the membership of the General Assembly, and on which there is wide support for many specific objectives. In Canada's view, the seriousness of the humanitarian impact of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons requires continued, concerted action by the international community. The resolutions emerging from the First Committee may provide significant impetus to practical follow-up to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

In five weeks, the Third Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) will be under way in Geneva. Here again, the States parties to the Convention will have an opportunity to advance the humanitarian-motivated aims of the CCW and consolidate its application. The entry into force of protocol V, on explosive remnants of war, will be celebrated at the Conference. Recent events only serve to demonstrate how important it is for the standards embodied by the Convention to become general practice.

Immediately following the CCW review, the Sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons will be held, also in Geneva. Against the backdrop of concerns about

biological terrorism, it is crucial that the Treaty's core prohibition against biological weapons be reaffirmed and reinforced. Canada has developed a series of practical proposals for enhancing the effectiveness and authority of the Convention. Those have been set out in a working paper entitled "An accountability framework", and cover issues such as annual meetings, procedures for improved confidence-building measures and organized implementation support. We have already begun working with other States parties so that we can emerge from the Review Conference with tangible results that strengthen the purposes of the Treaty.

Looking ahead to 2007, we face additional challenges in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament field. Our work in the First Committee can make important contributions in that regard. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has not come to grips with the challenges posed by the defection of North Korea from the Treaty and continued concerns over compliance by Iran with its obligations pursuant to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Security Council resolutions.

Canada believes that the power and authority of the NPT need to be reinforced in the face of those and other challenges, or we risk seeing the non-proliferation norm undermined and the world slipping back into an unregulated competition for nuclear weapons. Canada has in the past set out several suggestions for a revamped NPT process that would entail at least annual meetings of an authoritative gathering of States parties and a standing bureau to provide stewardship and continuity. We hope that the First Committee will provide positive direction to that process as we look ahead to the first NPT meeting of a new review cycle, in the spring of 2007.

At the St. Petersburg Summit this July, Canada and its G8 partners dedicated themselves to the reinvigoration of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation forums "beginning with the Conference on Disarmament". The protracted stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament has prevented it from undertaking the purposeful negotiating work it was set up to do. This year an innovation, the so-called Six Presidents Initiative, has allowed the Conference to follow a year-long timetable providing for a focused discussion on all seven of its substantive agenda items. However, that timetable only allocated one week of discussion per agenda item, and made no differentiation between items like a fissile materials cut-off treaty, which enjoys wide support and is ripe for negotiation, and an item such as "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", with no current proposal for action.

While the solution to the impasse at the Conference on Disarmament must emerge from Geneva, and not New York, we hope concerned States will continue to support the efforts of the outgoing and incoming Presidents of the Conference — Slovakia and South Africa — to identify recommendations that will enable the Conference to resume substantive and sustained work when it reconvenes in January.

Among the key pieces of unfinished business in the nuclear-weapon file is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We need to encourage the last 10 annex II States to sign or ratify the Treaty. Canada was pleased to join with other "Friends of the CTBT" here last month to focus political attention on the need to put into place this crucial support beam for the nuclear non-proliferation edifice.

Of course, concern over the state of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament environment is not limited to the diplomats in this room. The cross-regional non-governmental organization grouping, "The Middle Powers Initiative" recently launched its Article VI Forum as a means of promoting greater cooperation between civil society and Governments in the pursuit of the NPT goals. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade was pleased to support the Forum in Ottawa on 28 and 29 September. We hope that those who participated in it will have come away with better insights into current problems facing the regime, and a renewed sense of purpose to find practical solutions.

Canada continues to play a leading role in the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, aimed at expediting the fulfilment of disarmament commitments and preventing the threat of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction. We recently announced over $150 million in contributions for projects in Russia and other States of the former Soviet Union.

The First Committee has shown itself capable of considerable reform in recent years, and we look forward to continued progress in that regard. Canada intends to contribute actively to the structured discussion of key themes such as outer space security,

nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; conventional arms control and an arms trade treaty; and verification. We are leading on draft resolutions devoted to initiating negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile materials cut-off treaty, and providing for follow-up to the report of the United Nations Panel of Government Experts on Verification. We will also work constructively with partners on a range of other issues before the Committee.

To the extent that this universal body can demonstrate, in its deliberations, a substantive and positive approach to tackling the many challenges of the multilateral disarmament realm, it will provide useful impetus and backing as we carry our work forward in the relevant forums over the next 12 months.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): At the outset, I join other delegations in congratulating you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. I also extend my congratulations to the members of the Bureau on their election. As a woman myself, I personally welcome women's leading role in the United Nations this year, from the President of the General Assembly to yourself, Madam. Without a doubt, you have a challenging task ahead of you. However, my delegation is optimistic that, with your experience and able leadership, you can effectively guide our work in the First Committee to a successful conclusion.

I also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, for his introductory statement, which is very useful for our work.

Thailand aligns itself with the statement made earlier this week by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the statement made today by the representative of Myanmar, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The sixty-first session of the General Assembly has convened under heightened international anxiety about the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are issues of concern to Member States. During the general debate, both in the Assembly and in the First Committee, Member States have expressed concern over the lack of progress on disarmament issues, the global threat posed by armed conflicts and the menace of terrorism.

In particular, Member States have voiced concern over the lack of progress in the multilateral machinery dealing with disarmament issues, the failure of the World Summit Outcome document to include provisions on disarmament and non-proliferation, and the fact that last year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons concluded without progress on that substantive agenda item. To cap it all, the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July this year, was only able to adopt a procedural report, without a substantive outcome document.

Nuclear weapons, along with other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, never discriminate between civilians and combatants. With their devastating and merciless impact, such weapons should by no means be used against humankind, even as a last resort. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, Thailand believes that both disarmament and non-proliferation are faces of the same coin, and should be addressed in a constructive and balanced manner. Nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States have an equal and shared responsibility to see to it that both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are fully implemented. As for Thailand, the Thai Government is in the process of amending domestic laws and regulations in order to ratify the CTBT after the process has been completed.

While addressing the issue of weapons of mass destruction as a matter of grave concern, we should remind ourselves that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is also a serious threat to international peace and security. It has been estimated that 60 per cent to 90 per cent of deaths in violent conflicts are caused by small arms. The risk posed by small arms and light weapons is compounded by its link to terrorism and transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking. Thailand therefore attaches great importance to the prevention and suppression of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and is fully committed to the United Nations Programme of Action.

The Thai Government has been able to achieve satisfactory progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action. However, there are States whose progress requires technical and/or international financial assistance. The international community should provide assistance to those countries, in order to enable them to achieve the Programme's objectives.

More than half a million people in Thailand are exposed to the risk of landmines. As a party to the landmine Convention, Thailand is doing its utmost to fulfil our commitments under the Convention, despite our limited resources. As an affected country, we can speak with authority about the humanitarian impact of landmines and the high cost of mine clearance. Thailand therefore emphasizes the importance of international assistance to mine-affected countries with limited capacity, so that they may overcome the serious threat of landmines and enable their people to live free from fear. What is important is to provide not only assistance in stockpile destruction and mine clearance, but also humanitarian assistance to mine victims and their families.

Terrorism is spreading, and terrorists are active in many parts of the world. Delay in negotiations on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation risks having weapons of mass destruction fall into the hands of terrorists. By completely eliminating weapons of mass destruction, we can ensure that they are not delivered into the hands of terrorists.

At a time when the state of global disarmament negotiations looks less than optimistic, we must not let our resolve be weakened. Instead, we must seek to break the impasse by working collectively and constructively to address the issue. Thailand remains committed to the United Nations as the multilateral negotiating mechanism on disarmament. We hope that in the coming weeks, through our collective efforts, ingenuity and political will, progress will be made. In that regard, I assure you, Madam Chairperson, of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Madam, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I am confident, Madam Chairperson, that your able leadership and rich and vast experience will contribute to the anticipated success and guide us in dealing with the vital aspects of our disarmament efforts.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, Nigeria and Lesotho on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of African States and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), respectively.

Achieving full disarmament in conventional and non-conventional weapons remains the cornerstone of the international peace and security efforts spearheaded by the United Nations. The failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to come up with a final document, the lack of agreement to include multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation on the World Summit agenda, and the failure to reach consensus at the 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects are unfortunate and do not augur well for disarmament initiatives. My delegation is deeply concerned by those disappointing outcomes and the resulting stalemate.

When we agreed in 2000 on the 13 practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, pursuant to article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), there were promising prospects for their successful implementation. But so far there is no evidence of commitment from Member States to support that initial optimism. Nevertheless, we still believe that the future of the NPT rests on the implementation of the 13 practical steps as a useful way to move forward.

Tanzania is fully committed to supporting the entire NPT regime. In recent years, it has ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba, which established the African nuclear-weapon-free zone. It has also ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and signed an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in conformity with the CTBT. Tanzania's Parliament has also passed legislation ratifying the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

We urge nuclear-weapon States to change the basis of their defence doctrines from the

confrontational legacy of the cold war to that of the new global collective security. We see no merit in trying to upgrade existing nuclear weapons and increase the precision of their delivery systems. We are equally opposed to any new attempts by States to acquire nuclear weapons. In the same vein, we condemn any illegal transfer of nuclear technology to individuals and non-State actors, a nightmare scenario that may enable terrorists to have those weapons of mass destruction. The transfer of such weapons would further complicate the negotiations on and the implementation and verification of the NPT regime. The NPT enjoys universal adherence among Member States. We call upon those countries that have not adhered to it to do so with a view to ensuring that the rest of us are collectively safe under the NPT umbrella.

Non-nuclear-weapon States have voiced their concern and called for assurances from the five declared nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT. Such assurances are vital to remove the temptation for new States to pursue the nuclear option, and their excuse for doing so as a deterrent or defence against nuclear threats or even attacks. The assurances should be viewed as a temporary measure pending the complete eradication of nuclear weapons. We once again call upon nuclear-weapon States to honour their obligations and conclude a legally binding agreement on negative security assurances, as the signing of protocols to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones is not adequate and is in no way legally binding.

Tanzania takes note of the nuclear testing moratorium maintained by the nuclear-weapon States. Nevertheless, self-imposed or unilateral moratoriums provide no guarantee against future testing. My delegation therefore believes that the only guarantee is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty. That was one of the objectives of the 1995 Review Conference. It is regrettable that the CTBT has not entered into force, for lack of ratification by 10 of the required 44 nuclear-capable States.

We consider the CTBT to be a vital component of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We believe that it stands to play a key role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Its early entry into force is therefore crucial, and we should strive to make that happen. In that context, we call upon all States that have not done so to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible, particularly those States whose ratification is a prerequisite for the Treaty to enter into force.

We wish to emphasize the importance of the three pillars of the NPT: non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Those pillars should be treated equally; any attempt to de-link them or deal with them selectively will have a damaging impact on the Treaty.

In that connection, we underscore the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the verification and safeguarding of nuclear programmes to ensure that they are used for peaceful purposes and not for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. It is incumbent upon all States to give the IAEA unimpeded access to national nuclear programmes. We should offer it the necessary support to enable it to perform better. That includes all States parties signing the additional protocol, as called for under article III. The goal should be the universalization of the additional protocol, as proposed by the 2000 Review Conference.

As part of our efforts to seek freedom from fear, as articulated and advocated by the Secretary-General, Tanzania also reminds the international community that small arms and light weapons are not only the weapons of choice in most conventional conflicts today, but in some part of the world, especially in developing countries and Africa, constitute real weapons of mass killing. Tanzania reiterates its call upon the international community to continue working, through the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, for a legal regime to guide the import, export and transfer of small arms and light weapons at both the regional and international levels.

Mr. Al-Istanboli (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate you, Madam, on behalf of my delegation, upon your election to the Chair of this important Committee. We are fully confident that your efforts will permit us to achieve concrete results, and my country is ready to cooperate with you towards achieving that success. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau, and thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his important briefing and his efforts to enhance international cooperation in order to halt the arms race and promote effective mechanisms for disarmament.

Much hope has been expressed for the success of the Committee's work, and it will not be impossible to realize that hope if all delegations demonstrate the

necessary flexibility and political will so that we may emerge from the present impasse, which is retarding our advance. That impasse is due to a number of States remaining outside the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Moreover, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet been implemented, and there is a stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

My delegation supports all the noble efforts aimed at eliminating all weapons of mass destruction. My country has adhered to the relevant international conventions and treaties, in particular the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the NPT and the CTBT.

Last May, my Government ratified the comprehensive safeguards agreement and additional protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as part of the NPT. My delegation encourages all States that have not yet adhered to the NPT to do so as quickly as possible. At the same time, we emphasize the legitimate right of all States to the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty and in compliance with the international norms and controls as authorized by the IAEA.

Serious and repeated international calls for the destruction of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, have not produced any positive development worth mentioning. The reasons for the delay in fulfilling those demands include the lack of transparency and the use of double standards by influential States when addressing this issue.

When considering in particular nuclear disarmament, it is important to take a balanced position between nuclear disarmament and control of such weapons. The international community is called upon to address all issues concerning disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the IAEA plan of action. In addition, the NPT requires serious, comprehensive review, because it has not kept up with the times.

There is an increasing need to limit the supply of small arms and light weapons to Governments or parties authorized by Governments; legal restrictions should also be imposed on the trade in and possession of small arms and light weapons.

With regard to Iran and the nuclear issue, no country in the region or outside it can hide its concern regarding the existence of a nuclear programme, whatever its use may be. In addition, we could not be fully certain that there would be no damage to mankind or the environment resulting from the use of such technology. There are many lessons to be drawn from that issue. The Chernobyl reactor disaster, which has killed tens of thousands of people and caused enormous destruction to the environment in many ways, is a case in point.

Thus, the Sultanate of Oman has called for making the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. The establishment of such a zone will lead to a positive environment of cooperation between the countries of the region and help to control the arms race there. In that regard, the Sultanate of Oman calls upon all parties to the talks to keep the negotiations open. Direct dialogue is the only means to bring about the necessary solutions to that nuclear issue.

With regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, all parties are called upon to return to the Six-Party Talks as quickly as possible, in order to settle all the issues peacefully.

The establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East requires the support of the international community, as it will have a positive impact on the stability and security of the region and on international peace and security. My delegation supports the proposal to establish such a zone, and expresses its concern about insecurity in the Middle East due to Israel's non-adherence to the NPT. We call upon Israel to immediately adhere to the NPT and submit all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA.

In order to improve the efficiency of the Committee's working methods, my delegation would like to emphasize the importance of multilateralism in addressing disarmament matters. Oman supports the promotion of multilateral mechanisms for disarmament as well as confidence-building measures as the only way to bring about complete and total disarmament.

My delegation hopes that the deliberations of the Committee and its resolutions will fulfil the expectations of all peoples for peace, stability and sustainable development.

Mr. Patil (India): Please accept my delegation's warm felicitations on your assumption of the Chair of the First Committee, Madam. We are most happy to see in this position an illustrious representative of Norway, a country that has distinguished itself in the advocacy of peace and disarmament. You have our full cooperation and support.

The United Nations can play a central role in making a reality of the general and complete disarmament for which the international community yearns. The First Committee, tasked to deal with disarmament and related international security questions, is the instrument for achieving this, as it provides a universal forum for Member States to assess the current global security environment, identify threats to international peace and security and recommend concrete measures to combat them.

The threats we face today are global in character and therefore need global solutions. No State possesses the capability to confront them by itself. The imperative of cooperation has never been more evident. However, collective security, which inspired the founders of the United Nations, remains only an idea, with security of States being largely predicated on national capabilities. This imperils and weakens the international security system.

It is the lack of a shared perspective that has stalled the Conference on Disarmament and prevented consensus on the disarmament and non-proliferation segment of the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The Conference on Disarmament has failed to reach agreement on its programme of work. Procedural fixes and debates have failed to bridge these differences. India remains committed, as always, to supporting initiatives that foster a consensus based on the priorities and concerns of all States, to break the deadlock in the Conference.

An important component of international security is energy security. As the global economy expands, spurred by high growth rates in emerging economies, the global demand for energy will dramatically increase. Given the imperatives of sustainable development and the risks from climate change, nuclear energy offers us an environment-friendly source for meeting the global demand. We believe there is an immense opportunity for international cooperation combining with indigenous national efforts to ensure a diversified energy mix for sustainable development.

Another looming danger is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and global terrorism. The growing possibility of terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction has added a new and dangerous dimension to the threat presented by such weapons. The existence of networks of proliferators, aided and abetted by elements within State structures, has further aggravated this threat.

It is therefore of paramount importance that States renew their commitment to fulfil their responsibility to fully abide by the non-proliferation and disarmament obligations that they have assumed voluntarily under various legal instruments, and that they take seriously the requisite measures to deny non-State actors, including terrorists, access to weapons of mass destruction and related equipment, materials and technologies.

India's own impeccable record on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has been recognized and appreciated by the international community. Our Parliament's enactment in June 2005 of comprehensive legislation on the prevention of unlawful activities related to such weapons strengthened the existing legal framework for that purpose. We have also updated our export control regulations and lists to reflect the best export control international practices. We shall continue to ensure that India will never be a source of proliferation.

However, we must not lose sight of the goal of nuclear disarmament, which should remain the international community's highest priority. Progress towards nuclear disarmament has unfortunately stalled, and the global disarmament machinery remains paralysed, leading to disquiet among the international community. Non-proliferation and disarmament ought to be mutually reinforcing. This is a challenge for the General Assembly to take up.

The very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly, resolution 1(I) of 1946, sought the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We can commemorate this glorious vision on its sixtieth anniversary by renewing our commitment to general and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament. Member States unanimously embraced this objective in 1978, at the first special

session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In our view, another special session might provide much needed impetus to the consensus achieved in 1978 and help bring about forward-looking approaches which take into account the concerns and priorities of all Member States.

The principles of restraint and responsibility are the sheet anchor of India's nuclear doctrine. While maintaining a credible minimum deterrent, India has made no dilution of its commitment to nuclear disarmament, which remains a core objective of its foreign policy, because India believes that its security, as indeed that of the entire world, would be enhanced in a nuclear-weapons-free world. India's nuclear doctrine, espousing no-first use per se and the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States is itself a minimalist doctrine reflecting our civilizational abhorrence of violence and destruction.

India has thus continued to observe a voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive tests. India is ready to join negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. On this basis, India joined the consensus on the 1993 resolution on this subject, resolution 48/75 L.

It may be recalled that at the 1988 session of the General Assembly our late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi presented an action plan for nuclear disarmament within a specific time frame. To reaffirm India's abiding commitment to the goal of global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament, and to outline concrete steps towards a nuclear-weapons-free world, we present a working paper, distributed with my statement, which seeks to reaffirm the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons; reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines; reduce nuclear danger, including the risks of accidental nuclear war, by the de-alerting of nuclear weapons to prevent their unintentional and accidental use; negotiate a global agreement among nuclear-weapon States on "no-first-use" of nuclear weapons; negotiate a universal and legally binding agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States; negotiate a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; and negotiate a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons, and on their time-bound destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

The steps mentioned in the paper are not exhaustive, nor do they exclude other measures for achieving the same goal. They are not listed in order of priority, nor do they have any implementation-specific sequencing. We hope that our paper will spur dialogue among States on both the need for nuclear disarmament and the means to achieve it.

Abiding by your appeal to keep statements short, Madam Chairman, we propose to utilize the thematic debate to outline our approaches to the issues related to biological weapons and to small arms and light weapons and other conventional weapons. For now, we wish only to underline the importance we attach to the success of the review conferences of the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), to be held later this year.

Meanwhile, I hope that the deliberations in the First Committee will meet our expectations and enhance international peace and security.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): First, I congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of our Committee. Your lengthy and broad experience guarantees that under your skilful and capable leadership our work will be crowned with success. You can rest assured of the full support of the delegation of Cameroon in carrying out your lofty mission.

The lack of significant progress in the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation process continues to cause Cameroon concern. The Conference on Disarmament has made some strides in 2006 by organizing procedural debates on all the items on its agenda. However, there is an urgent need for it to begin its substantive work in 2007.

My country will continue to strive for a world free of nuclear weapons, whose existence is in itself a serious threat to international peace and security. This threat is further increased by the attempts of terrorist groups to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

The complete elimination of all nuclear arsenals is, in my country's opinion, our only guarantee in the field of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament and

non-proliferation must be tackled together. There is also an urgent need to fully implement Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) to prevent weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

The international community must therefore step up its non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament efforts, above all by working for the universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); for the swift entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); and for the conclusion of an instrument banning the production of fissile material for military purposes.

With respect to the Iranian nuclear issue and that of the Korean peninsula, my country remains convinced of the need to resolve these questions by diplomatic means. We call upon all the parties concerned to begin constructive negotiations to that end.

Chemical, bacteriological and toxin weapons are also a matter of grave concern for my country. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to accede to the legal instruments banning such weapons so that the instruments can become universal. With regard to chemical weapons in particular, while my delegation welcomes the progress made since the entry into force of the Convention, it underscores the ongoing danger posed by stocks of chemical weapons to both the environment and people. We therefore call on those countries that possess such weapons to destroy their stockpiles as soon as possible.

Cameroon was deeply disappointed by the failure of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York from 26 June to 6 July. Nonetheless, my country strongly reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action. We welcome the fact that it continues to enjoy broad support within the international community, as demonstrated at the Conference.

The Darfur crisis is another source of grave concern for my country. Cameroon urges the parties concerned to settle, through dialogue, modalities for the deployment of the peacekeeping operation in Darfur, and calls for substantial support for the African Union mission, which, as is well known, is confronting considerable difficulties in terms of finances, logisti and troop levels.

Ministers taking part in the 24th Ministeri Meeting of the United Nations Standing Adviso Committee on Security Questions in Central Afric held in Kigali from 25 to 29 September, discussed t threat that the continuing deterioration of the situati in Darfur implies for the security and stability of t countries of Central Africa. They decided to organiz in 2007, a subregional conference on responses cross-border security problems, to make it possible mobilize the international community on the basis concrete border-security projects.

My country reaffirms its full support for t activities of the Standing Advisory Committee, whi since its establishment has played a major role confidence building and promoting disarmament Central Africa, as well as in the quest for tangib solutions to the many problems of peace and securi faced by the countries of the region. The year adoption by consensus of the draft resolution on t Committee's activities reflects the support that enjoys among all Member States. My delegation thank the Secretary-General and the Department f Disarmament Affairs, which acts as the secretariat the Committee, for their support, and encourages the to continue it. We urgently appeal to all Member Stat to contribute to the special fund to finance t Committee's extra-budgetary activities. If it is to ful its important mission, the Committee will requi continued support, particularly in the form of voluntar contributions.

My delegation also appeals for support for t United Nations Regional Centre for Peace a Disarmament in Africa, which is currently confronti serious financial difficulties, particularly regardi implementation of its operational activities. It is cruci that the Centre be able to carry out its importa missions and respond to Africa's peace a disarmament needs.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): I join previou speakers in congratulating you, Madam, on yo assumption of the chairmanship of the Fir Committee. My delegation is confident that under yo able leadership the Committee will have a productiv and successful session.

Every year Armenia takes the opportunity inform the Committee about its advances in the field

disarmament and non-proliferation and to present its position on several topical issues relating to international security. We also use this opportunity to speak about our security challenges, drawing attention in particular to regional developments in the South Caucasus.

I would like first to speak about the former issue. The adoption five years ago of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was an important milestone. It reflected the shared understanding of our common responsibility to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which had become an agent fuelling many conflicts throughout the world, causing grave human suffering and threatening security and stability in many regions.

Armenia welcomed the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held this summer in New York. Like many others, my country had great expectations of the Review Conference, and was deeply disappointed by the lack of consensus to produce an outcome document. Armenia is committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action, and hopes that the spirit of cooperation and readiness to fight this scourge will prevail and bring new results.

My country has consistently declared its commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, to nuclear disarmament and to non-proliferation. In this context, I am pleased to inform the Committee that Armenia recently ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and submitted its instrument of ratification to the Secretary-General.

Armenia attaches the utmost importance to conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. Since Armenia is situated in a region where a number of frozen conflicts still exist and there is a lack of regional security agreements to ensure durable peace and stability, international arms control arrangements are crucial for the security of the whole region, and my country in particular. It goes without saying that under such circumstances the unconditional and complete observance of the provisions of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of stability and peace in the South Caucasus.

In that regard, Armenia draws attention to Azerbaijan's violation of the Treaty. According to information submitted within the frameworks of the United Nations and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe, in 2005 Azerbaijan imported 44 battle tanks and 83 large-calibre artillery systems, thus violating the ceilings established for that country under the Treaty. Over the past two years, Azerbaijan has not declared any arms reductions. According to the annual exchange of military information for 2005, it possessed 217 battle tanks and 260 large-calibre artillery systems. Hence, overall figures for 2006 in those armament categories exceed the established ceilings of 220 for battle tanks and 280 for large-calibre artillery systems.

We are seriously concerned over this gross violation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. It is obviously a result of the arms race policy recently unleashed by the Azerbaijani authorities, accompanied by the endless militaristic and aggressive rhetoric often used by its leadership, rhetoric that contains explicit threats of the use of force and attempts at a military solution to the existing conflict. As a result, today we witness an unprecedented growth of Azerbaijan's military budget, which has drastically increased over the past few years. This enormous growth of military expenditures, pumped up by petrodollars, undeniably testifies to the intention of the Azerbaijani authorities to upset the existing military balance and derail the Nagorny Karabakh negotiation process.

These steps by the Azerbaijani authorities are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. They also run counter to various United Nations documents and resolutions related to the reduction of military budgets, regional disarmament, conventional arms control at the regional level and transparency in armaments — issues that are part and parcel of the debate on the disarmament agenda.

There is no doubt that this policy cannot yield any positive results. To the contrary, it will lead to an increased threat to the fragile security and stability of the region, resulting in, inter alia, a stalemate in the efforts to resolve the existing disputes in the South Caucasus. It is not surprising that the European Union Commissioner for External Relations Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, warned Azerbaijan in a recent statement that its plans to drastically step up its military spending might result in further escalation of the situation in our volatile region.

Armenia remains fully committed to its international obligations on arms control and disarmament. We are confident in the viability and efficiency of the relevant United Nations instruments in enhancing trust, building confidence and promoting regional dialogue and cooperation. Full compliance with United Nations resolutions and regional arrangements on arms control and disarmament is one of the most essential and critical factors that can bring us closer to stability, cooperation and durable peace in the South Caucasus.

Mr. Jevremović (Serbia): I congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee. I assure you of my delegation's readiness to work closely with you, and I offer you our best wishes and full support. I also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Serbia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, but I would like to make the following additional remarks.

In order to increase confidence among Member States and promote peace and security, we need a cooperative approach to collective security and an international order based on rules. We should highlight the role of international verification and effective multilateralism, and support measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, with the Security Council as the ultimate arbiter.

It is necessary to improve efforts to consolidate global treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty into force would contribute to putting an end to the development of new nuclear weapons. Negotiating a global treaty to stop the production of fissile material for weapons would eliminate the source of new material and help to prevent a possible arms race. That is necessary because nuclear, biological and chemical weapons are the most inhumane of all weapons, and their impact is far more indiscriminate and long-lasting. There is an urgent need to revive meaningful negotiations, through all available intergovernmental mechanisms, on the three main objectives: reducing the danger of present arsenals, preventing proliferation and outlawing all weapons of mass destruction once and for all.

As for the maintenance of peace and security in South-Eastern Europe, allow me to refer to the joint statement of the President of Serbia, Boris Tadić, and the President of Croatia, Stjepan Mesić, expressing their satisfaction at the promotion of cooperation in the region, particularly condemning all war crimes and highlighting the significance of our common future in united Europe. We also attach great significance to the Agreement on the Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction recently signed with the United States.

Serbia has engaged in the following activities to fulfil its international commitments.

Serbia formally acceded in September 2003 to the Ottawa Convention on landmines, which entered into force on 1 March 2004. Since 1992, anti-personnel mines have not been manufactured or stored in the Republic of Serbia, and their transfer is not allowed. The Republic of Serbia demining centre carries out its activities as planned, and cooperates effectively with international donors and experts. We particularly emphasize that, with the assistance of international donors — Canada and Austria in particular — and the support of the Maintenance and Supply Agency of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the millionth mine, out of a total of 1.3 million, was recently destroyed. If that pace is maintained, the Republic of Serbia will have honoured its obligations in this respect before the deadline in 2009. Our plan is to clear all areas contaminated with mines by the end of 2008. The plan can be delayed only in the absence of the external support needed to finance demining.

In addition, the illegal trade in small arms and lights weapons is a serious problem that affects stability in our region. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, with its direct connection to organized crime and terrorism, is a real threat to peace and security. That is particularly in evidence in Serbia's autonomous province of Kosovo, currently under United Nations interim administration, where large-scale illegal trade in and smuggling of small arms and light weapons flourish. If we want to resolve this problem, we need to ensure full implementation of the Programme of Action on the matter, particularly by strengthening export controls and regional and international cooperation.

Serbia is committed to working against the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of small arms

and light weapons. In 2004, with the assistance and financial support of the United Nations Development Programme, Serbia destroyed a total of 35,000 weapons and 42,000 pieces of ammunition, the best record in South-Eastern Europe.

Great attention has been devoted to outreach programmes to raise public awareness of problems related to the trade in small arms and light weapons, and the dangers posed by their illegal possession. My country is deeply disappointed that the Review Conference of the Programme of Action was unable to agree on an outcome document. It is therefore necessary to renew efforts nationally, regionally and globally.

As party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Serbia supports efforts to achieve its full implementation, and reiterates its firm belief that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Its three pillars — nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy — constitute an important foundation of the maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, the 2005 Review Conference achieved no substantive results. This demonstrates the weaknesses in the non-proliferation regime, and we must therefore improve our efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as an important item on the agenda of the international community. Hence, Serbia looks forward to the first Preparatory Committee meeting for the next NPT Review Conference in 2007. Early agreement on unresolved issues will create new optimism.

We attach great importance to the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with which we signed the framework agreement on technical cooperation in 2003. The strengthened safeguards system adopted by the IAEA through the additional protocol should become standard for parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this regard, we highly value the efforts of the IAEA in preventing the diversion of nuclear material from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

As a non-nuclear State, my country supports all regional and multilateral meetings that stress the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and accelerate the ratification process. Therefore, we support development and operation of the verification regime, including the International Monitoring System and the Nuclear Data Centre and its secretariat, so that the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization is ready to monitor and verify compliance with the Treaty once it enters into force. We support the final text of the Joint Ministerial Statement on the CTBT adopted a few weeks ago.

It is regrettable that this year the Conference on Disarmament remained deadlocked over its programme of work. However, thanks to the initiative of the six Presidents, the Conference on Disarmament now seems to be back on the right track. We hope that such initiatives can facilitate the adoption of a substantive programme of work. The current and incoming Presidents should cooperate closely so that the Conference on Disarmament can finally start negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as soon as the beginning of next year's session.

Biological weapons are a subject of serious concern for my country. Serbia fully honours the provisions of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). In cooperation with some European Union States, it seeks to respond as effectively as possible to all challenges that may emerge in the wake of their use. To that end, many concrete activities have been undertaken in order to strengthen measures for the prevention, suppression and elimination of dangers from biological agents and toxic materials that may be used for bio-terrorism purposes. The States parties to the Convention should launch a campaign to achieve universal adherence and promote best-practice models of such legislation. Serbia appeals to all Member States to try to find common ground during the Review Conference, which will take place in Geneva this autumn.

My country also supports universal and strict implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). In this context, of particular importance is cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), based in The Hague, and the fulfilment of my country's obligations under articles V and VI. In addressing these problems, Serbia has organized several international courses on protection from chemical weapons. Therefore, Serbia calls on all countries that possess such weapons to do everything in their power to destroy all their stocks of

chemical weapons within the time frame envisaged in the Convention.

In conclusion, I stress that Serbia strongly supports effective control of the international trade in conventional weapons, in accordance with criteria that apply globally. This is a vital first step towards establishing an arms trade treaty. One of the main objectives of such a treaty must be to prevent conventional weapons from being diverted to illicit purposes, such as organized crime and terrorism, without prejudice to the right of States to produce, acquire and maintain such weapons for self-defence purposes, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter.

I conclude by expressing the hope that during the current session we shall produce strong and effective resolutions that will enable the international community to address in a practical way the current and emerging threats to international peace and security.

Mr. Jeenbaev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the Kyrgyz delegation, Madam, I congratulate you on your election and wish you every success in your work. We are certain that under your skilful guidance we shall be able to carry out our tasks.

We would like to emphasize the important role the First Committee plays in working out general views on, and approaches to, the key issues of disarmament and international security. On the basis of mutual dialogue, we shall be able to reach a better understanding of the problems and priorities of security, and to broaden our general positions.

One of the basic concerns is to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The operation of the Treaty should be based on its three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the right of all States parties to conduct research in the area of nuclear energy and to produce and use it for peaceful purposes. States should continue efforts to obtain the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by acceding to and ratifying the Treaty. We regard the CTBT as one of the key instruments in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and as an instrument for strategic stability and security.

Supporting the efforts of the international community, on 8 September this year five Central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — signed in Semipalatinsk an agreement on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The signing of that treaty is proof of our commitment to the principle of non-proliferation and of our efforts to make a collective contribution to strengthening international security. We emphasize that the treaty calls for environmental rehabilitation of areas damaged as a result of activities forming part of the nuclear arms race, in particular areas used to store spent uranium fuel stocks. The Kyrgyz Republic, which is a depositary of the Central Asian treaty, expresses the gratitude to Member States and to international and non-governmental organizations that have welcomed the signing of that historic document.

I would now like to deal briefly with a number of other issues on the Committee's agenda. The international instruments on weapons of mass destruction, particularly chemical, bacteriological and toxin weapons, should become universal so as to ensure their effectiveness in maintaining international security. We believe that the coming Review Conference of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention could lead to a breakthrough in efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the Convention. We welcome the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1540 (2004) on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the technologies and materials associated with them. We are actively working to strengthen export controls other mechanisms required for implementation of the resolution.

Kyrgyzstan is also taking appropriate measures at the national level to prevent the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We support an active role on the part of the United Nations in solving this problem.

In conclusion, we express our hope that during the current session the Committee will be able to meet more effectively the new challenges that the international community faces in the sphere of disarmament and international security.

The Chairperson: The representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

I remind all delegations that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, the number of interventions in exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a

given meeting should be limited to two per item. The first intervention in the exercise of right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting should be limited to ten minutes and the second intervention should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Ismayil-Zada (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of my delegation, I congratulate you, Madam, on your appointment to your elevated post.

The bold statement by the representative of Armenia about my country has caused me to ask to speak in exercise of my right of reply.

I would first like to dwell upon a number of figures that relate to armed forces in Armenia itself, where 316 battle tanks, 322 artillery systems and 5,000 members of the Armenian armed forces exceed the standards set. This was stated in the report of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The figures go beyond all the standards relating to that country within the framework of the treaties in relation to the number of inhabitants.

I would also like to point out the anti-personnel mines placed in the region by Armenian separatists in the so-called period of war to free Nagorny Karabakh. Many people of Azerbaijani nationality have suffered as a result in the areas bordering on this region. Therefore, the Republic of Armenia does not respect its obligations under international law. It does not respect resolutions of the Security Council and is an obstacle to peaceful development in our region.

Organization of work

The Chairperson: Before adjourning the meeting, I propose that we revert to the question of the indicative timetable for the second phase of the Committee's work.

A new revised document, A/C.1/61/CRP.2/Rev.2, has been distributed to all delegations this morning, because the list of guest speakers for the afternoon meeting on Monday 9 October has now been finalized.

As members can see, we will have the pleasure of having the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament join us.

We also have to amend the references to the meetings on Tuesday 17 October and Wednesday 18 October, with the insertion of "informal" to faithfully reflect the practice followed last year; the meetings on those two days will be informal.

It is my intention to divide the formal meetings into three segments, so that the Committee can fully utilize the time allocated to it by engaging in productive discussions, as well as having all the draft resolutions introduced in an efficient and timely manner.

The first segment will start with a guest speaker for some meetings, as indicated in document A/C.1/61/CRP.2/Rev/2. After the speaker has made his or her opening statement, I will briefly suspend the formal meeting so that we may have an informal question and answer session with the guest speaker. Afterwards, we shall resume the formal meeting and proceed to the second segment, which will consist of interventions by delegations on the specific subject under consideration. The third segment, which is also formal, will allow time for the introduction of draft resolutions and decisions.

May I take it that the proposed indicative timetable for our thematic discussions, contained in document A/C.1/61/CRP.2/Rev.2, as orally revised with the insertion of the word, "informal" for Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 October, is acceptable to all delegations?

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me thank you, Madam, for distributing the revised conference room paper. Certainly we can go along with the changes you have just mentioned.

I take the floor to explain yesterday's position of this delegation.

We found in the official records that at last year's organizational meeting the Chair made the following statement:

> "during the second phase ... I plan to allocate two meetings for an exchange with the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and other United Nations officials and for the follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at its past session, including the presentation of reports. Like last year, those events will take place in an informal mode." (*A/C.1/60/PV.1, p. 3*)

I believe that with the changes you have proposed, Madam Chairman, we follow last year's pattern, and my delegation agrees with this proposal.

The Chairperson: That observation is correct.

May I take it that the proposed indicative timetable for our thematic discussions, contained in document A/C.1/61/CRP.2/Rev.2, as orally revised with the insertion of the word "informal" for Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 October, is acceptable to all delegations?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.